DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 330 SP 038 746

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TITLE Preservice Teacher Performance Assessment during Student Teaching: Consequences and Pitfalls.
PUB DATE 1999-03-00
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the National Symposium of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (Bellevue, WA, March 25-27, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; Cooperating Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Development; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Mentors; *Performance Based Assessment; Preservice Teacher Education; *Student Teacher Evaluation; Student Teachers; *Student Teaching; Teacher Collaboration
IDENTIFIERS Evergreen State College WA

ABSTRACT

This paper describes student teacher evaluation at Evergreen State College, Washington, examining its 2-year, graduate-level initial certification program. The school began by reviewing its full-time student teaching program, testing a modified version of Danielson's (1996) "Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching." All cooperating teachers, supervising college faculty, and teacher candidates involved in the graduate program were surveyed to determine the effectiveness of the school's new performance-based assessment of teacher candidates involved in full-time student teaching. Results demonstrating a positive impact on student learning around state learning goals were the focus of extensive deliberations among program faculty and an external advisory board. The school revised its internal assessment procedure and was granted continuing accreditation by the State Board of Education under its new performance-based criteria. This paper describes lessons learned, focusing on consequences and pitfalls. Overall, having primarily full-time faculty supervise student teachers was critical in implementing performance-based assessment during student teaching. Continuous mentoring was critical in helping teacher candidates meet performance requirements. Cooperating teachers and college faculty needed collaborative professional development to increase their mentoring skills under the performance-based system. Teacher candidates needed early exposure to the performance requirements for student teaching. (SM)

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ED 433 330

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presented at

NASDTEC
(National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education & Certification)
National Symposium:
Perspectives on Performance-Based Education, Certification, and Assessment

Bellevue (Washington) Hyatt Regency
March 25-27, 1999

SP038746

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Preservice Teacher Performance Assessment During Student Teaching: Consequences And Pitfalls

by
Michael Vavrus

Like other higher education teacher preparation programs in the state of Washington, my institution – The Evergreen State College – is accountable to the state Board of Education under new, performance-based accreditation requirements. By this the state

> means a program that requires the candidate to demonstrate in multiple ways, over time, specific state board of education required standards, criteria, knowledge and skills, including, where appropriate, evidence related to a positive impact on student learning. (Washington SBE, p. 2)

Specifically, the state expects teacher education programs "to prepare educators who demonstrate a positive impact on student learning…[through] experiences in which they acquire and apply knowledge about…the state goals and essential academic learning requirements" (EALRs) for K-12 students (Washington SBE, pp. 7-8). Furthermore, the provision of the teacher education curriculum must be "guided by a conceptual framework" (Washington SBE, p. 7).

During 1996 when drafts of the state's new requirements were made available, the faculty in Evergreen's Master in Teaching Program – a two-year, graduate-level initial certification program – began a comprehensive review of its full-time student teaching program after determining that this was the most reasonable location in the program for teacher candidates to "demonstrate a positive impact on (K-12) student learning." The timing of our review also coincided with the publication of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) publication *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (Danielson, 1996). Of the evaluation instruments we reviewed for preservice and currently practicing

teachers, the ASCD document was most attractive to us. In particular, we found the following features of author Danielson's (1996) work appealing to our work:

- research-based (see especially pp. 136-140),
- focused on student achievement with a constructivist, student-centered orientation grounded in cognitive psychology,
- values teacher reflection to improve instruction,
- describes continuum of teacher behavior from "unsatisfactory" to "distinguished,"
- comprehensive in representing the complexity of teaching, and
- modifiable for a preservice teacher education program[1] to reflect elements of our program's conceptual framework and state expectations regarding state learning goals and the EALRs.

As we revised our entire handbook for cooperating teachers and our student teachers (Evergreen, 1998b[2]) – including the assessment rubric -- with a panel of experienced K-12 teachers during the spring academic quarter of 1997, faculty were also introducing drafts of the document to teacher candidates who would be student teaching for two quarters (= 20 weeks full-time) during 1997-98. It was with this cohort of approximately 55 teacher education students that we tested our modified version of the Danielson's framework. At the conclusion of the fall 1998 quarter all cooperating teachers, supervising college faculty, and teacher candidates who had been involved our student teaching program were surveyed to determine the effectiveness and the appropriateness of our new performance-based assessment of teacher candidates involved in full-time student teaching. Results related to teacher candidates demonstrating "a positive impact on student learning" around the state learning goals and the EALRs were the focus of extensive deliberations among our program faculty and our external

[1] Permission to modify the framework for our program granted by author Danielson.
[2] Available as a supplemental document to this paper (contact author for request).

advisory board of K-12 teachers and administrators. I was also interested in learning from the survey how assessment elements we had created based on our program's conceptual framework (see Evergreen, 1998, pp. 5-6) were working in the field. By February 1998 we had revised our internal assessment procedure with our advisory board and in March became the first program in the state to be granted continuing accreditation by the state Board of Education under its new performance-based criteria.[3] The most significant contributor to this process was the way in which the modified assessment rubric was able to demonstrate performance across a wide-range of the state's knowledge and skills expectations for teacher education programs (see Appendix).

Figure 1, "Performance Expectations of Evergreen Teacher Candidates for Addressing EALRs & State Goals during Full-time Student Teaching," is an example of the modifications we made in the framework in order to capture teacher candidate performance for impacting student achievement. We also modified certain framework elements to reflect our conceptual orientation toward the preparation of teachers, especially in regards to democratic schooling and a multicultural/anti-bias perspective.[4] Figure 2, "Performance Expectations of Evergreen Teacher Candidates for Addressing Democratic & Multicultural Issues during Full-time Student Teaching," contains three such examples.

Lessons Learned

As we conclude our second year of using a performance-based assessment instrument in our student teaching program, we have been learning lessons along the way. These lessons are divided in this section into consequences and pitfalls.

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[3] According to the Washington state director of Professional Education and Certification at that time, Ted Andrews, Evergreen "has done a great job of demonstrating how it furthers education reform in our state" (Evergreen, 1998a).

[4] For an in-depth look at how the Evergreen teacher preparation program faculty think about and organize their curriculum around these issues, see Vavrus et al. (1999).

Figure 1

Performance Expectations of Evergreen Teacher Candidates
for Addressing EALRs & State Goals during Full-time Student Teaching

from Component 1c: Selecting Instructional Goals in the Context of Key Concepts
We expect the teacher candidate to demonstrate and provide evidence that

"Key concepts and goals are appropriate in meeting the school district's application of the State of Washington Student Learning Goals & standards from Commission on Student Learning." (Evergreen, 1998b, p. 32)

from Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning
We expect the teacher candidate to demonstrate and provide evidence that

"Activities & assignments are appropriate in meeting the school district's application of the State of Washington Student Learning Goals & standards from the Commission on Student Learning."

(Evergreen, 1998b, p. 41)

from Component 4b: Maintaining Accurate Records
We expect the teacher candidate to demonstrate and provide evidence that

"Assessment is appropriate in meeting the school district's application of the State of Washington Student Learning Goals & standards from the Commission on Student Learning." (Evergreen, 1998b, p. 44)

Figure 2

Performance Expectations of Evergreen Teacher Candidates
for Addressing Democratic & Multicultural Issues during Full-time Student Teaching

from Component 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect & Rapport

We expect the teacher candidate to strive toward and provide evidence of his/her efforts to implementing

a "democratic classroom management system...designed to create a learning community that consistently values cultural diversity and regularly seeks the active participation of all student-citizens" (Evergreen, 1998b, p. 35).

from Component 4e: Growing and Developing Professionally

We expect the teacher candidate to strive toward and provide evidence of his/her efforts to

"acknowledge and critically reflect upon his/her own received cultural perspective and come to know how that perspective influences his/her understanding of and actions toward individuals from groups different that his/her received culture...[so that as a future teacher each graduate will] use insights of cultural encapsulation to make culturally appropriate contributions to student learning and school improvement activities." (Evergreen, 1998b, p. 46)

from Component 4f: Showing Professionalism

We expect the teacher candidate to strive toward and provide evidence of his/her efforts to engage in "multicultural and anti-bias advocacy" by

making "a particular effort to challenge negative attitudes and help[ing] ensure that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, are honored in the school." (Evergreen, 1998b, p. 47)

Consequences

1. By focusing on articulated performance expectations of teacher candidates, rater subjectivity was reduced and the validity of professional judgment has increased.

2. Curricular experiences early in the program serve to introduce teacher candidates to field-based performance expectations.

3. Principals, *master* cooperating teachers, and school district curriculum directors and staff development directors have affirmed the appropriateness of performance-based assessment of preservice teachers placed in classrooms with K-12 students.

4. Planning, instructing, and assessing units of instruction around the EALRs is evaluated from a developmental perspective for becoming teacher.

5. Theory meets practice more deeply now that program curricular focus on issues surrounding democracy and multicultural advocacy are given performance-based expectations.

6. Infusing concepts of democracy and multicultural advocacy into student teaching assessment has provided program faculty an opportunity to explore these issues more directly and legitimately with cooperating teachers.

7. A performance-based assessment rubric in student teaching has resulted in an increase in the use of similar approaches by faculty in other aspects of the teacher education curriculum.[5]

Pitfalls

1. Some teacher candidates and cooperating teachers reported that the written documentation associated with some performance-based evidence is overly burdensome.

2. Faculty have experienced a significant rise in needing to document more precisely shortcomings of teacher candidates having difficulty meeting minimum performance-based requirements during student teaching.

3. An increase in the number of teacher candidates who have been released from the program due to unsatisfactory performance in student teaching has resulted in a corresponding increase of due process considerations by faculty.

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[5] For example, many writing assignments come with performance-based ratings, including those for completion of the master's project. A group of faculty members are currently developing an extensive performance-based assessment rubric in an attempt to capture culturally responsive teaching, especially from a Native American perspective.

4. Most cooperating teachers new to our performance-based assessment only begin to realized the importance and significance of program expectations for teacher candidates mid-way through the student teaching assignment, reducing the mentoring effectiveness of cooperating teachers.

5. A significant number of cooperating teachers lack the necessary knowledge base and expertise to provide mentoring of teacher candidates for meeting the state's expectations for planning, instructing, and assessing around the EALRs.

6. Performance-based expectations within a rubric alone provided inadequate for explaining the scope of the expectations underlying EALRs document of a positive impact on student learning.[6]

7. Placements with cooperating teachers who early in the assignment turned out to be resistant to school reform efforts and the constructivist nature of the performance assessment instrument has resulted in increased teacher education faculty and staff time for reassigning teacher candidates to more compatible student teaching sites.

8. Although not an entirely new phenomena, some teacher candidates have found themselves in deep states of cognitive dissonance (or some form of defensiveness or denial) between their professed beliefs in student-centered learning and multicultural education vs. their actual practice of constructing a democratic environment for such goals to be initiated and sustained within K-12 schools.

Discussion: Reflections and future considerations

Having primarily *full-time* faculty supervise teacher candidates is critical for the successful implementation of a performance-based assessment during student teaching. The challenges for adjunct and/or doctoral candidates assigned to the supervision of student teachers would be daunting under such a system. If disconnected from the overall orientation and history

[6] To supplement the stated performance expectations, we had to provide additional guidelines to the *Student Teaching Handbook* regarding appropriate attention to EALRs (see Evergreen, 1998b, p. 21)

of a program faculty's interpretation of and goals for performance-based assessment, any such faculty supervisors would lessen their likelihood for successful mentoring of teacher candidates. Mentoring, therefore, is a critical element in assisting teacher candidates in meeting performance requirements. Mentoring of this kind requires continual experience and reflection with other teacher education program faculty.

Teacher education colleagues in the Columbus, Ohio, area have reported to me positive experiences in working with Danielson's (1996) framework when K-12 cooperating teachers have been trained *through their respective school districts* in the use of the framework. For Evergreen and other colleges who are using Danielson's (1996) approach or similar performance assessments, teachers knowledgeable in the theory and application of mentoring and evaluating under a performance-based system would alleviate many of the school-based pitfalls we have encountered.

Ideally, cooperating teachers and college faculty need to engage in collaborative professional development for increasing their collective skills for mentoring teacher candidates under a performance-based system. For Evergreen, curriculum development, implementation, and assessment of the EALRs would need to be a significant component of such professional development. We would also want to more deeply engage teachers in a dialog about performance-based expectations for democratic practices and multicultural education. This kind of professional development, however, faces competing demands in regards to cost, time, and perceived relative importance.

Teacher candidates will continue to need early exposure in the program to the performance requirements for student teaching. Teacher education students identified as marginal in meeting minimum program expectations prior to student teaching may be a signal

that the rigors of such a student teaching evaluation system will prove insurmountable – necessitating faculty to recommend stopping more candidates from entering student teaching. On the other hand, we have come to realize that a stronger stance toward denying marginal teacher education applicants admission to the program may provide a partial solution to this potential problem. This has necessitated our taking a closer scrutiny of philosophical fit of applicants with our conceptual framework and curricular orientation. An applicant's academic ability and overall life experiences are examined more closely now in relationship to the potential the applicant may have for engaging constructively in the demands of performance-based assessment. The gate-keeper role for allowing individuals to become teachers of the children and youth in our schools has been made more prominent in our minds through our work with and deliberations around performance-based assessment in student teaching.

Altogether, we have found that performance-based assessment in the manner that has been forwarded by Danielson (1996) compatible both with the state demands for performance-based assessment geared toward school reform and our program's conceptual framework and our particular model of a teacher preparation curriculum. For us the positive consequences have thus far out weighed the pitfalls.

Appendix

1. WAC 180-78A-165 Approval Standard – Knowledge and Skills

2. Comparison of Performance-Based Student Teaching Assessment Rubric Components to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) "Knowledge & Skills" Criteria

WAC 180-78A-165 Approval standard—Knowledge and skills.

Building on the mission to prepare educators who demonstrate a positive impact on student learning based on the Improvement of Student Achievement Act of 1993 (1209), the following evidence shall be evaluated to determine whether each preparation program is in compliance with the program approval standards of WAC 180-78A-140(5):

(1) **Teacher** candidates will complete a well-planned sequence of courses and/or experiences in which they acquire and apply knowledge about:

(a) The state goals and essential academic learning requirements.

(b) The subject matter content for the area(s) they teach, including the essential areas of study for each endorsement area for which the candidate is applying (chapter 180-79A WAC).

(c) The social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education, including an understanding of the moral, social, and political dimensions of classrooms, teaching, and schools.

(d) The impact of technological and societal changes on schools.

(e) Theories of human development and learning.

(f) Inquiry and research.

(g) School law and educational policy.

(h) Professional ethics.

(i) The responsibilities, structure, and activities of the profession.

(j) Research and experience-based principles of effective practice for encouraging the intellectual, social, and personal development of students.

(k) Different student approaches to learning for creating instructional opportunities adapted to learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and with exceptionalities.

(l) Instructional strategies for developing critical thinking problem solving, and performance skills.

(m) Classroom management and discipline, including:

(i) Individual and group motivation for encouraging positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

(ii) Effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication for fostering active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interactions in the classroom.

(n) Planning and management of instruction based on knowledge of the content area, the community, and curriculum goals.

(o) Formal and informal assessment strategies for evaluating and ensuring the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

(p) Collaboration with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community for supporting students' learning and well-being.

(q) Effective interactions with parents to support students' learning and well-being.

(r) The opportunity for candidates to reflect on their teaching and its effects on student growth and learning.

(s) Educational technology including the use of computer and other technologies in instruction, assessment and professional productivity.

(t) Issues related to abuse including the identification of physical, emotional, sexual, and substance abuse, information on the impact of abuse on the behavior and learning abilities of students, discussion of the responsibilities of a teacher to report abuse or provide assistance to students who are the victims of abuse, and methods for teaching students about abuse of all types and their prevention.

(u) Strategies for effective participation in group decision making.

(v) The standards, criteria and other requirements for obtaining the professional certificate. (Washington SBE, 1997)

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Comparison of Performance-Based Student Teaching Assessment Rubric Components to WAC "Knowledge & Skills" Criteria

Evergreen's Master In Teaching Program Fall & Spring Quarters, Year Two

Note: Specific performance expectations in K-12 classrooms for each component in the column on the left are located in the *Student Teaching Handbook* (Evergreen, 1998b) on pages 30-47. The criteria and procedures for evaluating the performance of teacher candidates is under "Final Evaluation Protocol," page 23.

WAC criterion/ ST Assessment Component	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v
Domain: ***Planning & Preparation***																						
• demonstrating knowledge of content & pedagogy	X	X			X					X		X		X								
• demonstrating knowledge of students		X			X					X	X										X	
• selecting instructional goals in the context of key concepts	X				X					X		X										
• demonstrating knowledge of resources				X						X									X			
• designing coherent instruction	X				X					X		X										
• assessing student learning	X				X					X					X							
Domain: ***The Classroom Environment***	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v
• creating an environment of respect and rapport		X			X					X	X		X							X	X	
• establishing a culture for learning		X			X					X	X		X								X	
• managing classroom procedures					X					X			X	X					X		X	
• managing student behavior					X		X			X	X		X									
• organizing physical space					X					X	X		X									

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Comparison of Performance-Based Student Teaching Assessment Rubric Components to WAC "Knowledge & Skills" Criterion
(continued)

WAC criterion/ ST Assessment Component	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v
Domain: ***Instruction***																						
• communicating clearly and accurately					X					X												
• using questioning and discussion techniques					X					X	X	X	X									
• engaging students in learning	X	X		X	X					X	X	X	X						X		X	
• providing feedback to students	X	X			X					X	X	X			X							
• demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness					X						X							X				
Domain: ***Professional Responsibilities***																						
• reflecting on teaching	X	X																X				
• maintaining accurate records	X						X								X				X			
• communicating with families			X													X	X					
• contributing to the school and district			X						X							X						
• growing and developing professionally			X	X				X	X							X		X				
• showing professionalism			X	X				X	X							X		X			X	

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